



Stories of the Suburbs: the Origins of Richlands 'Servicetown' / Inala Area on Brisbane's Western Fringe

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Stories of the suburbs: the origins of Richlands 'servicetown'/Inala area on Brisbane's western fringe.

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This paper is based on my research for an oral history project for Brisbane City Council and Inala Arts Inc. in 2000/2001*. Rather than collecting stories for this project myself, my task was to facilitate a series of three workshops to teach the local people how to conduct and collect their own oral histories. But I found the history intriguing. Inala has interesting origins as a semi-rural, industrial area which became a post-World War II soldier settlement. Its proximity to the Wacol Immigration Centre endowed it with a multicultural flavour from the 1950s as many immigrant families eventually settled at Inala. The Queensland government and locals developed an innovative solution to the problem of meeting the demand for housing by pairing up with the local industry giant, Pioneer Concrete, to produce prefabricated concrete houses. The history also serves to mark the significance of common place and street names in the current Inala/Darra/ Mt Ommaney suburban precinct.

[* I was contracted not to publish anything independently for 2 years but that period has since elapsed.]

Keywords: history, settlement, government, industry, Inala.

Key Events in the Growth and Development of the Inala Community

This history was derived from a Brisbane City Council/ Inala Arts Inc. project 'Waves of Change' designed amongst other things to motivate and train local Inala residents to collect their own oral histories. Three full day sessions were held at the Inala Community Centre Art Gallery to train participants to conduct interviews, identifying what we hoped to learn, familiarizing them with tape recording equipment and legal obligations, and producing typed transcripts. A number of drop-in morning teas were held which actually proved more popular with the locals than the workshops. This paper is a composite history based on interviews, people's recollections and my own research. The project, carried out in 2000-2001, was, I feel, designed to fortify the residents' civic pride and to bring people of various ethnicities and cultures together. The project was part of a major cultural festival which culminated in a street parade and celebration.

Early Aboriginal History around Inala District:

The first inhabitants of the Inala/Richlands area were the Jagara Aboriginal People, whose number has been estimated at 5000 people in 1824, just prior to the founding of Brisbane town as a penal colony for second time offenders.¹ The name 'Jagara' means 'no'. The oddity of this name derives from the European convention of identifying tribes by their word for 'no', rather than trying to establish their indigenous names.² The Jagara people shared the bountiful resources of the Brisbane River with the Jukambe and Kitabal tribes of Mt Lindsay Heights. In the words of one old warrior this was a place "where I can cut a spear or make a spear thrower without asking anyone".³ The Jagara homelands stretched from Cleveland westwards, through what is now known as the Brisbane Valley, to Gatton and Esk. The land, as described by explorers Cunningham, Fraser and Logan, was 'unremarkable' and "interspersed with swamps, clumps of Tea Tree and flats" but with "some excellent timber, ...honeysuckle tree and forest oak" here and there.⁴ The fertile river flats, home to mobs of kangaroos, were soon coveted for European-style mixed farms.

Intertribal fighting occurred sporadically, and undoubtedly increased in the 1840s due to the increasing pressure on the land caused by expanding British settlement. It seems big fights, involving both men and women, lasted for

¹ Norma McCormack, 'Camira 1823 to the Present: a short history', typescript, 1980: p.1; p.35.

² N.B. Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: their terrain, environmental controls, distribution. limit and proper names* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1974), p.42; p. 124.

³ Quoted in Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, p. 18.

⁴ J. Steele, *The Explorers of Morton Bay District 1770-1830* (St Lucia: UQP, 1972), p. 238.

several days, with casualties on both sides. Europeans commented on the sturdy physiques and warrior athletes of the Brisbane tribes. One settler, remembered only as Palethorpe, was not alone in recognising that the whites conquered the Aborigines by virtue of western firearms. "Man to man", he wrote, "no civilized race would have had any chance with the Aboriginal in his old warrior days. The white man would have been an easy victim to the wild athlete with spear, boomerang and throwing nulla ..." Without the gun to defend us, "they could have run us into the sea and annihilated us".⁵

The Jagara had early contact with Europeans: beginning with castaways such as the cedar getter Thomas Pamphlett and then John Oxley himself who, in 1823, sailed his cutter up the Brisbane River to a site he named Termination Plains (today's Prior's Pocket near Goodna).⁶ After camping the night, Oxley's party climbed Termination Hill, now the site of Wolston Park hospital. Oxley's hand-drawn maps indicate rich flats and good timber on the north-west bank of the river, with some fine open country around present-day Jindalee. The following year, in 1824, Oxley returned and journeyed towards Ipswich, where he observed dense forests of ironbark and sandstone ridges some 200 feet high. Soon afterwards, Major Edmund Lockyer pushed further up-stream to Redbank Plains, where he discovered coal deposits, and beyond to the Bremer catchment. James Fraser, the colonial botanist, also noted the thick veins of coal jutting out from the banks of the Bremer and collapsing into the river. To the south, the infamous Captain Patrick Logan, Commandant of the Brisbane penal settlement, explored the Logan River; while Cunningham, Fraser and Logan pushed through Archerfield on route to Mount Lindsay in 1828.⁷

In the darkest days of penal settlement, free settlers and casual visitors were prohibited from entering a fifty-mile exclusion zone around Brisbane which extended to Limestone (present-day Ipswich). In 1842, just 20 years after Oxley's initial exploration and three years after the closing of the penal settlement, Brisbane land was declared open for settlement and a contingent of mounted Aboriginal border police from NSW were brought in "to preserve order between squatters and Aborigines". Thus change came rapidly to the Jagara people and must have been unimaginably traumatic. Understandably, they tried to repulse the newcomers, attacking, for instance, the convict-built lime-kilns at Limestone Station (present-day Ipswich). The tiny settlement at Limestone consisted of the overseer's house, sheep and cattle-holding pens and a stockade for five or more prisoners. Here, as elsewhere in Australia, there are reports of Aboriginal people

⁵ Palethorpe's cutting book, held JOML.

⁶ Pamphlett, Finnegan, Parsons were shipwrecked in 1823 and rescued by John Oxley later that year. See Moreton Bay Database, www.users.bigpond.net.au/pludlow/Database.htm, accessed 21 October 2005.

⁷ Fraser's Journal reproduced in J. Steel, *Explorers of Morton Bay*, p. 234; 'Settlement of Ipswich', www.home.gil.com.au/~tmacey/history/ipswich.html, accessed 21 October 2005.

feeling deeply upset by the treatment of convicts, particularly those sentenced to hard labour.⁸

Dr Stephen Simpson, a British soldier who had served in Ireland (also considered as 'colonial service') during the Napoleonic wars and later trained as a doctor, was appointed civil magistrate and later the first state Commissioner for Crown Lands. The name 'Wolston' was introduced by Simpson in honour of his Warwickshire birthplace. Woogaroo, our 'Redbank Plains', figured in early colonial history as a permanent camp and crossroads where the main track from South Brisbane via Cowper's (now Cooper's) Plains met the track to the Darling Downs. At that time bullock wagons wended their way from the Darling Downs stations to Limestone and then on to Brisbane. The name 'Woogaroo' is thought to be Aboriginal for 'whirling around', suggestive of a whirlpool in the river. It was here that the Border Post Native Police were installed. With the establishment of a government sheep and cattle breeding facility at Redbank, government control became more entrenched.⁹

In quick succession the Aboriginal residents were thus exposed to soldiers, the convicts assigned to build Simpson's first residence and the NSW Native Police, not to mention the sundry travellers and the men plying strange craft up and down the river. Interestingly the two convict escapees ["wild white men"], James Davis (or 'Duramboi'), and David Bracewell, ('Wandi'), who had lived with Aboriginal people for many years before being recaptured, worked on the construction of Wolston House.

Because of the plentiful coal and limestone resources at Ipswich, ships were soon plying up and down the Brisbane River. The outcrops of limestone were quarried and hewed into blocks suitable for building the new towns of Ipswich and Brisbane. In the absence of roads, the stone was carried by flat-bottomed punts which took three to four days to travel along the river to Brisbane. Initially these punts and other craft were manned by convicts. Later shallow-draughted paddle steamers were introduced. In 1842 the paddle steamer *Sovereign* and the schooner *Edward* competed in a race to Redbank, but 17 miles upstream *Sovereign* hit a rock and was forced out of the race (the rocks becoming known as Seventeen Mile Rocks). In 1842 it seemed that Redbank was destined to become a major Brisbane River port, with a substantial wharf and wool-store erected by the sons of Andrew Petrie.¹⁰ On Monday 22 June 1846 a regular up-river steamer commenced service with the 37 ton *Experiment* but it too ran

⁸ 'Darra' local history' typescript, copy provided by Lesley Eason; 'Ipswich Discovery and First Settlement', BCC, <http://www.gil.com.au/-tmacey/history/ipswich.html>, accessed 23 October 2005..

⁹ Norma McCormack, 'Camira 1823 to the Present: a short history'; G. Riley, *History of Our Inala and Suburbs*; 'Darra' local history' typescript, copy provided by Lesley Eason.

¹⁰ J. Mackenzie-Smith 'Andrew Petrie, Father of Brisbane' in Brisbane History Group, Squatters, Settlers and Surveyors (UQP: 2000), p. 84.

aground, this time at Cockatoo Island near Goodna, where it stayed hard and fast until high tide the following day. The *Moreton Bay Courier* described *Experiment's* eventual arrival in Ipswich to rousing cheers and bagpipes. The paper's patronising reference to a group of "terrified Aborigines" who took off with howls suggests that they too were keenly watching these events. By 1850 seven steamers were engaged in the busy river trade, the fastest journey taking three hours to complete the 65 kilometre trip.¹¹ The volume of river traffic went into decline after the completion of the railway in 1875.

Moreton Bay's Expanding Settlement, the 1870s-1890s:

A 1870s steamer passenger Ebenezer Thorne described the scenery as a rapid succession of "flourishing farms, banana groves, cotton fields, orange groves, sugar plantations and sugar mills". He also commented on the fine view of the lunatic asylum at Woogaroo or Goodna, "a pretty township" with "two churches and a school". By the late 1880s the population was around 600 people, smaller than the asylum which had almost 900 beds (including 119 at Ipswich).¹²

The asylum, which opened in 1864, brought negative and positive changes. It was a curiosity and a detraction, but also a major employing agency in the area. Indeed all the warders were expected "to live within earshot of the shrill whistle that was blown when a patient escaped".¹³ Unusually, many local families paid the institution a small sum to have their daughters trained as nurses. The junior doctors had the right of private practice so that, unlike many parts of Queensland, doctors were at hand to assist with sickness, childbirth, and accidents.

The town maintained its importance as a cross-roads and hostelry for the stagecoach. The Woogaroo Hotel marked the end of stage 1 of the coach journey from Ipswich to Brisbane: Hotel Oxley, the end of stage 2, and stage 3 took the traveller to Brisbane.¹⁴ Cobb and Co took over the service in 1865 and expanded the run to two trips a day. Their service went as far west as Grandchester and Toowoomba. Travel was not without its share of excitement, as the passengers travelling on 7 January 1868 discovered when a bushranger William Jenkins held up their coach. For his audacity, Jenkins was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment.¹⁵ Compared with today's congested four-lane Ipswich Freeway, the main road was once a picturesque roadway lined with jacaranda trees that meandered along the river bank.

¹¹ N.McCormack, 'Camira', pp 13-19.

¹² Quoted from E. Thorn, *The Queen of the Colonies or Queensland As I Knew It* (London: Sampson Low, 1876). George Thorn was in charge of the government's sheep and cattle station and lime kiln at Limestone. C. Petrie, *Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Queensland* (Hawthorn: Lloyd O'Neil, 1975 reprint [1st ed. 1904]), pp.223-24.

¹³ Quoted in N McCormack, 'Camira 1823 to the Present: a short history', typescript, 1980: 35.

¹⁴ The successive proprietors were C. Collins, C. Williams and Mr Wood.

¹⁵ Cited by McCormack, 'SW Jack's Cutting Book', JOML, no. 21 - but the microfilm for book 21 could not be located at JOML.

While Redbank itself was becoming a thriving industrial centre with shutes for loading Campbell and Company's coal onto the barges, along with the produce of several sawmills and Town and Co.'s meat preserving factory (which handled 35,000 sheep in 1870). The big saw mills were Kruger's at Bundamba, Jones, Norman, and Noble's of Goodna, Martin's of Booval and Addison of Camira which survives today. The meatworks was a major industry, providing much local employment and cheap meat for the locals. The track from Gales to Redbank via Camira was the last part of the stock route from Logan. The drovers' camping places were Half Way Camp, Sandy Creek, and Coogan's Lane on Woogaroo Creek.

When the land east of Woogaroo was opened for settlement in 1851, Dr Simpson secured a moderate holding of 640 acres (at £1 per acre) for raising horses. He named his property Wolston Park. At the time, Cowpers (now Coopers') Plains had been nominated as a possible site for the Moreton Bay Jockey Club. Michael Durack, an Irish horse breeder at Archerfield, was a founding member of the Brisbane Tattersalls Club. Had the plans gone ahead, the land around Oxley may well have become Brisbane's premier residential sites. But fortune did not shine on Simpson: his wife had earlier died in childbirth and his appointed heir, his sister's grandson, James Ommaney, died from injuries sustained from a fall from his horse. The heartbroken Simpson returned to Britain and sold Wolston House to the Goggs family. For a time it hosted Brisbane's gentry and society folk for weekend fox hunts. In 1907 it was re-sold and used for dairying, until taken over by the Department of Primary Industry in 1960. Wolston House was heritage listed in 1968, becoming a popular venue for afternoon teas and weddings, but the site is now overshadowed by the foreboding Sir David Longland Correctional Centre.¹⁶

The railway signaled the last phase of Aboriginal dispossession of the land. The first Queensland railway connecting Redbank to Bigge's Camp near Grandchester, a distance of just 21 miles, was opened in 1865. The powerful Darling Downs squattocracy regarded Ipswich rather than Brisbane as their coastal capital. The first sod of the Brisbane section of the railway was turned by the Marquis of Normanby on 30 January 1873 at Six Mile Creek, close to the Bremer River at Redbank. Four heavy-duty locomotives were imported from England, and by 1875 passengers could travel as far as Oxley but then had to be ferried across the Brisbane River and complete the journey by coach. The fine stands of ironbark around Oxley were felled for the sleepers, hastening the clearing process. The railway line steadily pushed through to Sherwood, then Riverton adjacent to the Indooroopilly ferry. The construction of a bridge at Indooroopilly in 1876 finally enabled the last phase of the line to be completed.

¹⁶ G. Riley, 'Some History of the Inala District', typescript, pp 5-7.

The present bridge dates from 1895, as the first bridge was destroyed in Brisbane's catastrophic 1892 flood.

Like Redbank, Darra also grew as an industrial centre. The exact origin of the word 'Darra' is unknown, but some believe it has Aboriginal origins and derives from the word *dharau* meaning stones or perhaps 'darra, derra or durra' which refer to the 'thigh'. Others suggest that it was named after the Scottish town of Darra. In 1879 William Brittain established a brick and pipe works at Ebbw Vale but the dwindling supply of clay forced him to relocate to Darra that had extensive clay deposits. In 1899 Brittain purchased 200 acres at Darra for his operations, and a spur of the railway was extended to the brickworks. A small township of worker's cottages and a few shops sprang up around the railway siding. A district school inspector described Darra in 1914 as a "community formed almost wholly of working men", many of whose families were living in tents.¹⁷ Some years later, during the Great War, Darra was given a tremendous boost by the establishment of Queensland Cement and Lime Company at Station Avenue, on the northern side of the railway line. This major industry was to become the largest cement producer in the state and provided much employment. Many local men found work loading and unloading barges or working in the factory. The cement was made from washed river sand and lime – coral dredged from Moreton Bay shipped up the river by barge and crushed at Darra. To power the plant coal was freighted in by rail from nearby Ipswich. In turn, the cement industry spawned a number of concrete blockwork factories, such as the Besser and Monier Companies. The arrival of electricity in 1920 benefited both industry and the domestic consumers.

The Emergence of Inala:

Inala itself, some 18 km south of Brisbane in the greater Brisbane area, was initially conceived as an independent satellite city. The area was originally known as Boyland's Pocket, after Captain Boyland who leased a sheep grazing run from the NSW Government (adjacent to Simpson's holdings). Boyland was never a resident, and his lease terminated with separation from NSW in 1859. In early colonial times the 'Blunder' was a blind gully, some eight miles west from South Brisbane, which was used as a camping site for the bullock wagons going to Limestone or the Darling Downs. Its unusual name derived from the misadventure of three bullock drivers who camped in the gully to finish off a barrel of beer. After three days of hard drinking Bill the Blower, an American bullocky, who liked to boast that he had never made a mistake with his teams, was the worst for wear and his two drinking companions left him behind. They had yoked up his bullocks and expected him to follow, but when he failed to appear they returned to look for him. They reached the gully without sighting Bill but eventually found him driving the team minus the wagon back towards

¹⁷ 'Darra' local history' typescript, provided by Lesley Eason, p 3.

Brisbane Town. Bill's 'blunder' stuck to the spot and later the name 'Blunder Country' spread to cover the large area from Oxley Creek through to Archerfield and Richlands, including Blunder Road!¹⁸

Present-day Inala was an area of dense scrub but, once cleared, could be used for squatting, horse-raising and small farming. At one time every family kept chickens, grew strawberries, citrus, grapes and other fruit trees. The area was popular with early Italian migrants for farming and wine-growing. For many years, grapes from Richlands were the first to appear at Brisbane Markets, and, in peak season, 25 tons per day were being freighted to the southern markets. The Zanchetta, Zerlotti and Pola families were amongst these early wine-makers and vegetable growers. The area given to grape growing contracted steadily between 1960 and 1990, with almost none remaining today.¹⁹ During the war the Zerlotti family supplied fresh fruit and vegetables to the US Army.²⁰ Timo and Pino Zerlotti developed a nursery at Darra where they sold seedlings, potplants, and citrus. The Zerlotti gardens, where they tested Yates seeds for the local climate, became a showpiece until 1986 when Yates Seed Co. relocated to Carole Park.²¹

Little seems to have changed until after World War II, although during the Pacific War land at Archerfield Road was used as an ammunition dump and American military base. More significantly, in 1942 the Americans obtained land at Wacol, on either side of Ipswich Road, on which to build their Camp Columbia barracks. This was to have a vast legacy for the Richlands/Inala area from the 1950s onwards. At the end of the Pacific War, the Australian Army retained the northern camp, but the southern section was acquired by the Department of Immigration in 1949 and put to use as the Wacol East Dependent Holding Camp for Displaced Persons. It became the first port of call for many post-World War II European migrants and later people from south-east Asia. Of the first group, the greatest number were Poles, followed by Yugoslavs, Latvians, Maltese, Greeks, Italians, and Dutch.²²

After the war, however, a group of ex-servicemen, hoping to alleviate the acute housing shortage of that time, formed a co-operative to purchase land under the soldier settlement plan. The venture known as the Serviceton Co-operative was formed by Harold (commonly known as Hock) Davis and a group of some fifty ex-servicemen in May 1946. They planned to build a series of concentric streets

¹⁸ Quoted from Girt Riley, *History of Our Inala and Suburbs*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Information supplied by Doug Sherrington to Gert Riley, see G. Riley and Inala History Group, 'Richlands - Inala & Suburbs'.

²⁰ Information provided by Lesley Eason, interview with Sue Keays 19.11.2000.

²¹ G. Riley and Inala History Group, 'Richlands - Inala & Suburbs: historical pictorial', typescript, 2000, p. 42.

²² Information provided by residents; 'Brisbane- Darra - 'History of Darra'', <http://www.ourbrisbaen.com/living/suburbs/darra/history/>, accessed 22 October 2005.

with a recreational area and churches of various denominations at the hub. The legacy of this attractive layout is still in evidence. The first house was built in 1946 for co-operative member Ted Stafford at Azalea Street, Serviceton. Ted joined the co-operative whilst working as a boiler-maker for Qld Cement and Lime Co. (Darra) and lived in that house until 1996.

Sadly for those concerned, a lack of funds led the original Serviceton to become a 'failed military re-settlement area', and, following a court hearing in 1954, the Queensland Housing Commission purchased a total of 1039 acres, including the land held by the ex-servicemen's co-operative society. It was to form the nucleus of a new Housing Commission project—the largest of the Commission's projects—to develop a new satellite town, retaining the name Serviceton. The estate was to be subdivided into 3700 residential allotments plus facilities. The population was just 5,500 in 1954/55 but was expected to top 16,000 within a decade or so.

Serviceton proved a popular name for post World War II settlements, making it difficult for the post office to direct the mail. In response to complaints from postal authorities in 1953 'Serviceton' was changed to 'Inala'. The name 'Inala' is derived from an Aboriginal word for 'peaceful place'. The name was first proposed by the West Nundah Progress Association in the 1940s, when it was seeking a new name for the district it represented. But 'Inala' did not meet with the Nundah district residents approval, instead they choose 'Wavell Heights' in honour of Sir Archibald Wavell, Chief of British Empire Forces in North Africa. The prettier 'Inala' was duly adopted to replace the name Serviceton. Many years later, in 1981, the Australian Pensioners' Party Inala Branch made a further attempt to change the name 'Inala' but failed. The latter name change was proposed to overcome Inala's identification in the eyes of some as a poor housing commission area with a higher than average crime rate. But 70% of the residents showed their loyalty to Inala by rejecting the motion. Some residents suggested reversing the name to 'Alani' (the name adopted by the Alanies marching girl team).

Towards an Infrastructure - Building Inala's Public Housing and Amenities:

Inala housing has a unique history. In 1949 Queensland Housing Commission (QHC) called world-wide tenders for several contracts of 1,000 homes per contract to satisfy the enormous backlog in public housing after the war. State government officials toured Europe to inspect the work of the various companies that had responded to the tender but decided that the Adelaide firm Boscrete had a superior product. Boscrete's tender was £1,999 for a two-bedroom houses and £2336 for the three-bedroom version based on a 1,000 housing contract.

Boscrete had been building concrete homes since 1943 when C.R. Boss, a prominent Adelaide builder constructed a concrete home in Adelaide in the belief that concrete construction would satisfy the need for a quick and economical method of home building. He died before his dream became a

reality, but the project was carried on by his sons. A.J. Boss travelled to Servicetown in Brisbane where the QHC was just beginning to clear the large tracts of land it had purchased amidst the properties owned by an ex-servicemen's co-operative community. Work was to begin almost immediately. Contracts had also been allocated to four Europeans contractors: a French, Dutch, the Italian Lagnami-Passoti and a Swedish firm, who were committed to the same hasty timetable.

Construction began in January 1950. A.J. Boss got to work laying as many foundations as possible before the arrival of the firm's concrete wall mould from Adelaide. Five truck and trailer loads were duly dispatched from Adelaide to haul 55 tons of equipment to a new factory at Darra — which had also to be built. By the end of January 1950 Boss had laid 25 foundations down Buddelia St and the first set of concrete walls had been poured. According to A.J. Boss his system was far superior to their European competitors and Boscrete was later asked to take over some of their contracts. Indeed Boscrete was the only company to actually complete its contract.²³

Tragedy struck the Italian, French and Swedish timber houses when sections of the homes were destroyed by imported European borer. It was naively believed that these cold weather termites would be unable to survive the harsh Australian climate but they thrived. The homes had to be fumigated by pumping gas into a covering plastic tent over the house or by burning the infested timber. A number of brick houses in the area were built by the builder N.A. Kratzman who secured a contract for 150 houses.

Inala was always fully planned, designed as a satellite town rather than a suburb, and is well provided with public spaces. There are over twenty public parks in the Inala-Durack area. Street names, such as Woodland, Bunya, or Poinsettia ('the trees' area); Skylark, Rosella or Kestrel ('the birds') and Andromeda, Taurus or Virgo ('the stars') reinforce the feeling of nature. In keeping with its village atmosphere Inala has its own floral emblem: the Eureka Bottlebrush, a tall callistemon (salignus) species that can be seen growing along Rosemary Street, Serviceton and Inala Avenues.²⁴ It came about through the combined efforts of the Inala and Districts Garden Club and local Member of Parliament C. O'Sullivan. Rose Coleman is one resident who was attracted to the area on account of its green spaces.²⁵

The first small shops of what is now a major complex were owned by F&D Mellit and opened in 1962. The eight shops were typically of concrete block construction and comprised Mellit's butchery, Norm's fruit shop, a light hardware

²³ G. Riley, *History of Our Inala and Suburbs*, self-pub. 1988, p 7-10.

²⁴ 'Darra' local history' typescript, copy provided by Lesley Eason.

²⁵ Rose Coleman interviewed by A. Johnston and S. Keays, 4 October 2000.

store, a ladies hair-dresser, barbershop, Jay's delicatessen and a shoe shop. Inala Plaza Shopping Centre was opened in 1984, followed some years later by the Inala Heights Shopping Centre.

In the early days Inala district depended a great deal on rail transport, despite its distance from Darra Station. Between 1881 to 1901 the number of passengers catching the train at Darra increased ten-fold from 147 to 1405, and, until the mid-1950s, it was the only transport to Brisbane. It is a poor reflection on state planning authorities that the train line through Darra was not continued on to Inala. There is a story about Mum Bridgie who ran the local store at Darra; she would take meat orders from the customers, then catch the train into Roma Street, collect the provisions, and then deliver them by throwing them out of the train to people waiting by the railway line.²⁶ Inala was an area of low car occupancy, and until the provision of a regular Brisbane City Council bus service, transport was one of the biggest problems facing the residents. Trips to the hospital for medical treatment, for instance, became day-long safaris, involving four bus trips, a return train journey to Brisbane and often a long walk at the beginning and end of the journey. For many years Inala was only served by a private bus company.²⁷

Meeting Places, Formal and Informal: Churches, Schools, Parks, Clubs

Churches:

The foundation stone of Goodna's St Patrick's Catholic Church, then part of the Parish of Ipswich, was laid in 1880 by Bishop O'Quinn (who later dropped the 'O' from his name), first bishop of Queensland. Quinn was accompanied by pioneer priest Father Andrew Horan. The building was designed by the famous colonial architect Stombucco and constructed of stone from a local quarry. Goodna became a separate parish in 1892 but maintained strong links with Ipswich, rather than Brisbane. Two Catholic sisters, for instance, commuted from Ipswich to teach the catechism and later school lessons at Goodna. Members of the Catholic community staunchly supported the church and its convent. The first convent school was built by men of the parish who dragged in stumps from the bush. Each Sunday one devout mother, with a child in her arms, trekked from Redbank to Goodna to attend mass; and indeed two of this woman's daughters were to enter the convent. These days Inala has its own thriving St Mark's Catholic Church and school, which have derived a lot of support from ethnic

²⁶ Story related in G. Riley and Inala History Group, 'Richlands - Inala & Suburbs', p. 18.

²⁷ The company was owned by Mr Fitzgerald, a committee member of the Queensland Motor Bus Proprietors Association. G. Riley and Inala History Group, 'Richlands', p. 1.

communities such as the Filipino and Spanish communities. The Canossian Daughters of Charity also run schools and a hospice nearby at Oxley.²⁸

The Church of England built a church at Darra in 1888 but was unable to provide a minister and the building was subsequently sold to the Methodists with the popular Brisbane minister Rev. V. Woolcock at the helm. It was the first and oldest church building in the electorate and initially part of the Bundamba Circuit. It later became part of the Sherwood Circuit under the jurisdiction of the Darra Home Mission. Over the decades it is said that almost all Methodist ministers of note have preached at the Darra Church. The original church building did not survive and was rebuilt in 1926. St Hugh's Anglican Church now serves Inala's Anglicans, a significant number of whose families arrived from the UK in response to the 'Bring out a Briton' community sponsorship scheme in around 1957.

Other thriving Protestant churches are the Inala Samoan Methodist Congregation, the Aboriginal People's Church, the Aboriginal Inland Mission Community Fellowship (which began its prayer meetings at the home of retired missionaries, Harry and Audrey Kleinschmidt), the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, the New Life Assembly and the Baptist Vietnam Church in Biota Road. Indicative of its large Serb population, Queensland's first Serbian Orthodox Church, St Nicholas, was opened at Wacol in 1976. Its predecessor was a small Serbian chapel built by post war migrants at the Wacol East Dependent Holding Camp for Displaced Persons. Passerbys today are intrigued by the Phap Quang Buddhist Temple on Blunder Road and the Phat Da Buddhist Temple in Deodor Street. The latter provides a place for Vietnamese Buddhists to maintain their religion and culture, with plans to build a retirement centre nearby. These are just some of the churches in the Inala area, their diversity reflecting the multi-ethnic backgrounds of their congregations. The churches also serve as key centres of cultural transmission as demonstrated by the St Nicholas's Serbian Sisters Circle folkloric dance group.²⁹

Today, Inala residents tends to be comparatively religious with 2,106 Anglicans, 3,136 Roman Catholics, 748 Uniting Church, 1,953 other Christian faiths, 1,513 Non Christians and 1,627 with no religion.³⁰

Local Schools:

²⁸ G. Riley and Inala History Group, 'Richlands, p. 28.

²⁹ G. Riley and Inala History Group, 'Richlands, p. 28; Harry and Audrey Kleinschmidt interview with Sue Keays, 6 November 2000.

³⁰ 'Brisbane - Inala - ourbrisbane.com', www.ourbrisbane.com/living/suburbs/inala/home/ accessed 27 October 2005.

The Queensland Government introduced compulsory primary education in 1875. One of the earliest schools in the region was the Goodna State Primary School which opened at the beginning of 1870. By 1874 there were 175 pupils but the early growth was slow, with just 400 pupils by 1964. The Catholic Community established a convent school in 1910. A two-teacher school was opened at Darra in 1916 with 26 pupils. Some recent Darra School students interviewed Mrs Bolton, who was one of those early pupils, and were amazed to learn that there was no tuckshop, but on Fridays one mother would bake a large cake and sell slices at school. The school remained static until after World War II when the populations of Darra, Wacol and Inala increased dramatically. Under the population pressure Darra School grew to 900, but numbers contracted with the completion of new schools at Inala. With pupils from the Wacol Immigration Centre and Wacol Army Camp, Darra State School had a diverse student body and was one of the first Queensland schools to teach a multi-ethnic student population.

The following table reflects the population take off in the 1960s and points to relatively few students continuing on to secondary education. The 1960s were boom years with low unemployment.

The Opening of New Schools in the Inala region 1934- 1996

State School, Richlands (opened 1934 with 26 students)	St Mark's Catholic School (opened 1963)
State School, Inala (opened 1955, 282 pupils)	State School, Richlands East (1967)
State School, Serviceton (opened 1959 with 263 pupils)	Inala Special School (1968)
State School, Serviceton South (opened 1963 with 980 pupils)	State High School, Richlands (1970)
State School, Inala West (opened 1960 with 117 pupils)	State High School, Glenala (opened 1996 with 1592 students)
State High School, Inala (opened 1962 with 146 students)	

Many children, especially those attending secondary schools, had to travel long distances to complete their education. It was not until the 1960s that any secondary schools were opened locally, beginning with Corinda State High School in 1960, then Inala High School in 1962 and Oxley. Previously students had to travel by train to Indooroopilly High School or other schools.

At the early end of the education spectrum, Marie Robinson established Inala's first community kindergarten that was run largely by volunteers like Lesley Eaton, a trained Karitane Mothercraft nurse. The kindy was initially held at the Darra RSL, highlighting the importance of this community resource. Many of the local children attended Wacol Army Village kindergarten until the village was closed in 1986, and it was decided to relocate the whole kindergarten building and play areas – sand and all - to the more populous Goodna.³¹ Closely allied to the kindergarten, schools and many community organisations is the Inala Playground and Recreation Association which was founded in 1960.³²

Clubs and Adult Recreational Centres:

The shared experience and bonding of ex-service people created an early solidarity at Inala. Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, a RSSAILA (later Returned Servicemen's League or RSL) Club was built at Darra. Towards the end of the war the club actively recruited younger men - to succeed the World War I veterans now in their mid-40s - and encouraged them to take on executive roles. Plans were made to build a Memorial Hall, but the project lagged due to the shortage of building materials and increasing costs. A hall was eventually opened in 1954, made possible through generous donations of timber, interest free loans and the weekend work of voluntary labourers.³³ AL Boss was instrumental in building the Darra RSL. As the RSL had insufficient funds to complete the building, the Boss family made them an interest free loan and assisted in the construction. Following World War II, the Veteran's Advisory Service installed a former US army hut in Hock Davis Park for counseling purposes.³⁴

In later years people gravitated to the Inala Hotel Motel for their recreation or to the Oxley Pub, which was more accessible to people living south of Ipswich Road. Indeed locals warned of the inadvisability of attempting to cross Ipswich Rd after a few beers! Kevin Ward was the first licensee of the Inala Hotel Motel, situated on four acres at the corner of Freeman Rd and Rudd St, which opened in 1963 and could accommodate twenty-four guests. It became a popular venue for social functions, such as weddings and birthdays, whilst at other times patrons enjoyed the convenience of two bottle shops, a restaurant and hot take away food. Nowadays residents now have a choice of 'watering holes'.³⁵

³¹ G. Riley and Inala History Group, 'Richlands - Inala & Suburbs', p. 24.

³² The playground site (bounded by Bamboo, Robina and Japonica Streets) was drained and levelled for the playground and a substantial public hall erected at the cost of £10,700, information provided by Lesley Eason.

³³ N. McCormack, 'Camira, 1823 to the Present'; 'Darra', typescript, copy lent by Lesley Eason..

³⁴ Gert Riley: 'Some History of the Inala District', typescript, 1994.

³⁵ Information provided by Lesley Eason; Gert Riley: 'Some History of the Inala District', typescript, 1994.

Sporty Inala - Other Entertainments and Sports:

Besides their concrete house construction methods and contribution to the Darra RSL, the Boss family made a significant impact on the shape of Inala. The brothers built a large picture theatre at Inala in 1952 and then a sporting complex that was innovative for its time. Their cinema was constructed of reinforced concrete using the house system of framework and designed to sit 1000 patrons. At the time it was the most modern up-to-date suburban picture theatre in Queensland. The theatre was run by C.W. Boss who left the firm to concentrate on running the cinema and prospered until the coming of television in the 1960s. Older residents fondly remember the cinema - especially the Saturday afternoon matinees - as part of their formative years and early romantic experiences.

Diverging from their usual product, Boscrete constructed the Inala Sports Centre at Serviceton Avenue in 1960. This £80,000 complex comprised a popular Olympic swimming pool, a toddlers' wading pool, and, unusual for the time, a gymnasium building, a squash court, amenities building, snack bar and the manager's residence. The Olympic standard pool was used for competitive swimming and for school swimming lessons by 34,000 school children in 1993 and for swimming. One hot Brisbane day the crowd reached 2000, becoming difficult to control. Inala Sports Centre also boasted a skating rink with a space frame roof and, according to A.L. Boss, "had one of the best timber floors in the world, with the timber boards on edge bent around the contour of the rink, below these boards is a felt membrane and below, another timber floor supported on close centred joists, resulting in a noiseless floor".³⁶ The skating rink was renowned and people from all over Brisbane, sporting or social groups, and, on one occasion, a visiting New Zealand Olympic team would travel to Inala in order to enjoy these amenities.

In keeping with a new post-war 1950s suburb, Inala was family orientated. Both local and displaced people from war-torn Europe wanted to settle down and raise families. The popular slogan "Youth is Hope" seemed to point to a rosy future. In response to the problems of youth and the need for recreational activities and playing fields, the residents banded together to establish the Inala District Boys' and Girls' Clubs to foster the "healthy release of stored-up energies". There was literally a club for everyone: mum, dad and the kids. Mothers could join the ladies' swimming and keep fit class or, if older, the "old lads, bags and wags" keep fit class. The secretary Keith Brown claimed the Inala Association was one of the most progressive in Australia and catered for all manner of social, sporting and recreational activities. Sir Arthur Fadden was the patron of the Inala Clubs, and members were required to pledge their "unswerving allegiance to our country, to be non-sectarian, non-political, welcoming to all, regardless of colour or creed and in duty bound to uphold the civil laws of our community". It was supported

³⁶

Quoted in G. Riley, 'Some History of the Inala District', typescript, 1994, p. 9

by the local business community, the RSL, Brisbane City Council and individual donations.³⁷

The Inala Clubs began with just seventeen members who met in the back of a broken-down utility in someone's backyard and expanded to 850 members by 1958. It was looked on as a model by people interested in youth welfare, soccer, cycling, rugby league, marching, boxing, gymnastics, physical culture, hobbies, sports carnivals and the like. Four parents were needed each night to supervise the clubs and a volunteer sportsmaster and mistress were elected to oversee training and sporting fixtures. Clubs were held twice weekly and the RSL made its hall freely available. For the less sporty, there were theatre and film nights, the Vagabonds amateur dramatic club, as well as various fundraising groups such as the school ambulance committee which raised £6000 for the ambulance. The club's newsletter *Inala District Youth Gazette* was the first of its kind in Brisbane area.³⁸

The Club maintained close contact with the Wacol Migrant Accommodation Centre so that folk dancing and Latvian, Serbian, German, or Dutch-style singing joined the cultural repertoire. It ran a Junior Red Cross club at the Migrant Centre and Clare Royes, president of the basket ball club, conducted Saturday coaching clinics for girls. On one occasion volunteers took 160 migrant children to visit Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. In short, there was every opportunity for community involvement and a rewarding lifestyle. Indeed in those days Inala's residents must have been amongst the fittest and most community-minded in Queensland.

Community organisations:

Today the Inala area seems uniquely well served by various government assistance agencies, migrant services, voluntary service clubs and community organisations. Community organisations include the Inala Civic Centre which opened in 1962, Inala Community House (1966), Inala Community Development Association (1966), Inala Community Conservation Association (1978) and Inala Arts Inc. to name a few. Together these organizations provide practical information and try to assist people with social welfare problems, access to English language translators, and provide opportunities for fellowship and occupation to people who are commonly socially alienated, unemployed or housebound. The mission statement of Inala Community House is

"To serve our community by providing services and activities
which enhance and support the quality of life for families and children".

³⁷ *The Inala District Youth Gazette*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1958.

³⁸ *The Inala District Youth Gazette*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1958.

There are also strong community self help organisations such as Meals on Wheels, Inala Day Respite Centre or active service clubs such as the local Lions or Rotary clubs.

Resources for community education and leisure are provided by Inala's fine public library. The first Inala Municipal Library was opened by the Lord Mayor Clem Jones in 1963, but replaced by a larger library and state of the art technology complex in 1994. Because of Inala's ethnic diversity, the library houses a large collection of foreign language books, notably in Vietnamese and Spanish.

The opening of the Inala Community Health Centre in 1977 greatly improved access to medical services for mothers and children in particular. Women and children are particularly well catered for with such organisations as the Inala Women's Action group (1975), Icy Tea Women's Community Theatre (1980s), Inala School Aged Care, Inala Youth Care for homeless children, and Inala Save the Children Fund. Whilst pensioners are represented by the Inala Pensioners' League, Inala Senior Citizens' Club (1964), the Hub, and 60 & Better. Other recreational needs of Inala's younger and not-so-young residents are met by the Inala Scouting Association, Inala Police Club, the Blue Fin Fishing Club and more. The various ethnic groups have their own culturally representative bodies, such as the Aboriginal and Islander Cultural Studies Centre (1989). The continuance of all these groups and their success in providing practical, pastoral and health care has only been possible through the dedicated work of volunteers and committed professionals.³⁹

Over the years Inala has weathered economic disadvantage, perennial unemployment problems, ethnic tensions, negative stereotyping, youth problems and episodes of street violence, but it also has a well-defined sense of community, with neighbours who look out for each other and have supported each other through hard times. Many families have lived in the area for generations and value long-standing, often cross-cultural, friendships. Long-term residents tell you that life is tougher for people today, especially those with children, than it was thirty-years ago.⁴⁰ Joe Barratt points out that jobs were easier to come by then; men could pick up work at the meat-works, on the railway, as a builder's labourer, working on the roads, at the saw mills or elsewhere.⁴¹ The cement plant and brickworks were major employers of migrant labour. The towering Queensland Cement and Lime plant, with peak production

³⁹ Refer to Inala Community House, *Inala Community Guide 1999/2000* for full details..

⁴⁰ This is the view of Audrey Kleinschmidt, a former missionary from Woorabinda Aboriginal Mission who has lived at Inala for 30 years.

⁴¹ Information provided by long term resident Joe Barratt at a fact-finding morning tea session, held at Inala Arts Inc. Nov. 2000.

in the 1960s, dominated the river landscape (now Seventeen Mile Rocks Park) for many years, until 1991 when it was taken over and relocated to Gladstone.⁴² Whereas today some families are facing three generations of unemployment, with youth unemployment particularly high. It is hard to conceive of a modern Australian family with no experience or recollections of a regular bread winner in the household. It is well recognized that unemployment leads to social problems and is one reason behind community initiatives to create occupational activities. Secondly, locals want to see Inala become a safe place for raising families and seek to recapture the community spirit of earlier years.

Inala's public housing, support services, and proximity to the Wacol Immigrant Centre have ensured a steady stream of new settlers. It has also retained a sizeable Aboriginal population, many relocating from other parts of Queensland. These factors have made Inala a cultural crossroads, with waves of British and Western European immigrants in the 1950s, Asian and Middle Eastern people from the late 1960s and the first Vietnamese boat people in 1975. Australia's great post-war social experiment is a reality at Inala. People live with multiculturalism, sometimes with inevitable conflict, but also with much colour, celebration and creativity. Change has come with new housing developments such as Durack and the prestigiously marketed Forrest Lake development. Perhaps in response to the nearby residential developments, Inala has seen a population decline of around 2000 people since the 1960s (14,000 residents were recorded in 1963; 10,351 in the 1991 Census; and 12607 in the 2001 Census⁴³). Of the population counted in the 2001 Census, Inala has 898 Indigenous Australians, 6562 Australian-born and 4228 overseas-born people. The Housing Commission has accordingly sold some public housing and embarked on a urban renewal programme to renovate and modernise public housing and to update the local shopping malls. Many residents viewed the changes with trepidation but hopefully they will have proved positive changes, promoting a better lifestyle.

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